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Hermeneutics, rhetoric and informal logic

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Title: Hermeneutics, Rhetoric and Informal Logic

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1. Introduction

The scientific method is used to determine objective truths of the natural world, and is effective at arriving at such 'objective' truths provided that its subject matter is suitable to this method of inquiry. Unfortunately, with the scientific method comes the attitude of scientism which tells us to reject any notion of truth that cannot be arrived at 'objectively'. Problems occur, however, when we try to apply our scientific standards of truth to our 'life world', and these problems are most evident in the human sciences.

Hans Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur are concerned with such problems and have argued in their writings that a hermeneutical theory *is* an alternative to a scientific inquiry when humanity itself is the subject. Instead of an 'objectively' derived truth that corresponds to reality, hermeneutical inquiry seeks to understand and interpret our world. It is this rejection of the correspondence theory of truth that has aligned hermeneutics with rhetoric. According to Gadamer, in absence of demonstrable truth, the persuasion and acceptance which rhetoric seeks is "obviously as much the aim and measure of understanding and interpretation"(Gadamer 1977: 24). Thus hermeneutical theory has had a long association with rhetoric since "the theoretical tools of the art of interpretation (hermeneutics) have been to a large extent borrowed from rhetoric"(Gadamer 1977: 24).

In light of recent developments in the study of argumentation, I think it may be time to reevaluate the association of hermeneutics with rhetoric. Another method of inquiry has evolved, one which may prove to be closer to the aims of the hermeneutical project rather than rhetoric itself. The field to which I refer is informal logic. Since there is no one standard theory of informal logic, I have chosen the writings of Ralph Johnson, a well respected and veteran member in the informal logic field. Using his paper, *Argumentative Space: Logical and Rhetorical Approaches*, I will outline the differences between informal logic and rhetoric, and suggest that after an analysis of these differences, informal logic appears to be closer to hermeneutics in its overall structure and *telos* than rhetoric. Before doing so, however, more needs to be said about the connections between hermeneutics and rhetoric.

2. Hermeneutics and Rhetoric

As mentioned in the introduction, hermeneutical theory does not wish to *demonstrate* 'truth', rather, it seeks to understand our life world. On the topic of hermeneutical understanding, Ricoeur writes, "The first function of

understanding is to orientate us in a situation. So understanding is not concerned with grasping a fact but with apprehending a possibility of being" (Ricoeur 1994: 56). It is our existence within culture, language, and history that gives us a situatedness; however, it does not follow that we are completely determined by our situation. It is this situatedness that opens us to new possibilities. These possibilities of being can be contained within a text, or within a dialogue, and we must go through the process of understanding and interpreting in order to grasp the meaning of these other modes of being. Gadamer writes that this process involves, "working out appropriate projections, anticipatory in nature, to be confirmed "by the things" themselves, is the constant task of understanding"(Gadamer 1997: 267).

Part of the idea of situatedness are the concepts of 'horizon' and the 'fusion of horizons'. On this subject Ricoeur writes, "wherever there is a situation, there is an horizon which can be contracted or enlarged"(Ricoeur 1994: 62). Since one's situatedness is primarily responsible for one's horizon, when we communicate with another or with a text there is a "fusion of horizons", a common ground between oneself and another is found, and new possible ways of being emerge.

There exists an ethical element in this concept as well. Although I will return to this point later in this paper, for now it will suffice to say that enlarging one's horizon can be seen as an 'ethical move'. It is understood by Gadamer and Ricoeur that humans seek to understand each other and their life worlds. This understanding is achieved through an openness to the possible ways of being. Hermeneutics tends to regard quite favourably those who are willing to enlarge their horizon and reevaluate their respective positions.

The limits of one's horizon are determined by one's prejudices. It is important to note, however, that Gadamer uses the word with its original intention, literally, a prejudgement. Due to our situatedness, when we try to discern a new possible way of being, the open stance that we must take "includes our situating the other meaning in relation to the whole of our own meanings or ourselves in relation to it"(Gadamer 1997: 267). In this sense, prejudice does not have a negative connotation because without some prejudices, we would not have the possibility of any knowledge whatsoever, as there would no way to relate the alien to the familiar. Our openness to the text "involves neither a neutrality with respect to content, nor the extinction of one's self, but the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore meanings and prejudices" (Gadamer 1997: 268). These foremeanings and prejudices cannot and should not dictate the understanding one has of the text or the speaker. According to Gadamer, "the important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own foremeanings"(Gadamer 1997: 269). Relating Gadamer's concept of prejudice with that of a horizon, when we are engaged in the hermeneutical act of understanding and interpreting, our prejudices provide the possibility for the fusion of horizons, but ultimately, if a new possibility of being is to be realized, these prejudices must accommodate the new, extended horizon. This new

horizon does not dismiss the old prejudices, as it "is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices" (Gadamer 1997: 306).

When extending our horizons and reassessing our prejudices, the understanding occurs through language, "language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting" (Gadamer 1997: 389), yet it is important to note that this does not entail linguistic relativism, but rather a universalism. Gadamer writes:

Any language in which we live is infinite in this sense, and it is completely mistaken to infer that reason is fragmented because there are various languages. Just the opposite is the case. Precisely through our finitude, the particularity of our being, which is evident even in the variety of language, the infinite dialogue is opened in the direction of the truth that we are (Gadamer 1977:16).

Language does not 'trap' us; rather, it is the medium through which Being is revealed. Returning to the scientific method and its claim to objective 'truth', we can see that even science must engage in understanding and interpretation before explanation can be attempted because it also is necessarily language dependent.

What then happens to our all important concept of 'truth' if we do not have an 'objective' method to help us find our footing against a relativistic critique? In chapter two of his book *The Hermeneutics of PostModernity*, Gary Madison offers his interpretation of Gadamerian 'criteria' to follow when trying to determine the truth of an interpretation. Briefly, they are as follows: coherence, comprehensiveness, penetration, thoroughness, appropriateness, contextuality, agreement, suggestiveness, and potential (Madison 1990: 30). When one argues for the validity of a particular interpretation, "one adduces *reasons*, i.e. one appeals to certain commonly or widely accepted principles and maintains that interpretation 1 as opposed to interpretation 2, more faithfully embodies such principles" (Madison 1990: 32). Thus, here lies the first connection with rhetoric; acceptance as against truth. Instead of demonstratively *proving* or logically *deducing* the 'truth' of a given position, hermeneutical theory appeals to these 'criteria', and thus one is *persuaded* by the truth of a particular interpretation when the interpretation embodies these principles. This does not mean, however, that acceptance is *only* necessary and sufficient for the 'truth' of a given interpretation in the sense that one group's acceptance of an interpretation automatically renders it true. This would imply a sort of relativism that hermeneutics wants to avoid. To answer this charge, we must return to Madison and Gadamer. Gadamer writes:

And so we see that the rhetorical and hermeneutical aspects of human linguisticity completely interpenetrate each other. There would be no speaker and no art of speaking if understanding and consent were not in question, were not underlying elements; there would

be no hermeneutical task if there were no mutual understanding that has been disturbed and that those involved in a conversation must search for and find again together (Gadamer 1977: 25).

This quote not only illustrates the connection between hermeneutics and rhetoric on the basis of consent and agreement, it also underscores the second important connection between the two on the subject of *practice*.

Hermeneutics and rhetoric are concerned with practice in the sense that both intend to achieve a new understanding, or to rephrase this point using Gadamer's terminology, a fusion of horizons. The orator wants to convince us of her position, and the hermeneuticist offers reasons for her interpretation. Returning to the charge of relativism as a consequence of using acceptance as a truth criteria, according to Madison, the practice of hermeneutics presupposes "a kind of universality, that is to say, a communality" (Madison 1990: 32). Madison's 'criteria' for determining the 'truth' of a given interpretation are accepted by the community, and thus when we argue for a given position or for a given interpretation, this practice "therefore, bases itself on recognized, commonly accepted norms and seeks, through argumentation, to a legitimate new, concrete decision" (Madison 1990: 32). So although these principles are not demonstratively proven themselves, their acceptance by the community at large gives us a way of legitimizing our reasoning that is neither relativistic nor demonstratively universal.

In conclusion, rhetoric and hermeneutics intersect where one seeks an understanding with another or with a text. Understanding and interpretation are achieved through persuasion which naturally finds itself in the realm of the practical instead of the theoretical. Madison writes:

It is not to science but to *rhetoric or the theory of persuasive argumentation* that interpretation should look for its theoretical and methodological grounding...rhetoric has taught us that while in the realm of human affairs and action we can never be absolutely certain of anything, we can nevertheless have legitimate grounds for believing that some things are clearly better than others (Madison 1990: 35).

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3. Informal Logic and Rhetoric

In the introduction I said that the field of informal logic is by no means to be considered a homogenous whole. In light of this fact, I have chosen what I consider to be a good representative of informal logic as my authority on the subject. Ralph Johnson has written extensively on the subject over a twenty year period, and along with his co-writer J. Anthony Blair, is responsible for the launching and continued editing of the respected and successful journal *Informal Logic*. Using Johnson's article *Argumentative Space: Logical and Rhetorical Approaches*, I will outline the differences between informal logic and rhetoric, after which I turn to my main proposal.

The term 'informal logic' is sometimes regarded as a misnomer. While logic,

both ancient and modern "might be said to be that discipline which articulates and refines the standards (and their theoretical foundation) of right or wrong in matters of reasoning and argumentation"(Johnson 1996: 4), to call this area of philosophy *informal* seems like *a bon marché*. There are, however, some fundamental differences which point to the idea that while being informed by formal deductive logic (FDL), and rhetoric even, informal logic has emerged as a field in its own right.

For my purposes here, I cannot trace the historical background of informal logic. Suffice to say, however, that some of the fundamental differences between FDL and informal logic may have arisen due to a dissatisfaction with FDL's inability "to provide standards of good reasoning that illuminate the argumentation of ordinary discourse"(Johnson 1996: 5). Since the 1970's, many books have been written on the subject of argumentation with the purpose of enhancing students' reasoning skills. In addition, many universities have implemented 'critical thinking' courses which in turn have become part of the core curriculum for many faculties. The arguments used as examples for study in both the courses and the texts are usually taken from newspaper editorials, letters to the editor and other public sources of debate and controversy. So, like rhetoric and hermeneutics, informal logic is very much concerned with practice.

According to Johnson and Blair, informal logic can be seen as:

a branch of logic whose task is to develop non-formal standards, criteria, procedures for the analysis, interpretation, evaluation, critical and construction of argumentation in everyday discourse (Johnson and Blair 1988: 148).

Although this definition serves as a good starting point that emphasises informal logic's connection to practice, there are nuances to Johnson's theory that must be brought to light. It is important to note, that Johnson and Blair prefer a written model of argumentation as opposed to a spoken one. There are many reasons for this but briefly, it can be said that the written model has one clear advantage to the spoken one because it can be preserved and archived for future critique, thus escaping the temporality of speech.

To help us understand the differences between informal logic and rhetoric, Johnson uses a metaphor which he calls 'argumentative space'.

His thesis is that rhetoric and informal logic see this space differently. Argumentative space, and to this both informal logic and rhetoric would agree, has the following characteristics:

At the core of the practice is the process of arguing—a specific type of interchange between two or more participants. In the typical interchange, there is a difference in point of view that has crystallized around some issue (I), and one of the participants (the arguer) is attempting

to persuade the other of the truth of the thesis (T). An argument may be viewed as the distillate of this process, the product which emerges from it, whether in writing or in speech (Johnson 1977: 9).

To begin to see the difference, when we focus on three important aspects of an argument: *telos*, structure and evaluative criteria, the differing approaches to argumentative space between informal logic and rhetoric become clear. Although I have listed these three separately, in actuality, they are very much connected. The *telos* of an argument will determine its structure, and the specifics of a structure will be partly determined by the evaluative criteria.

Argumentative space is purposive, i.e. we are seeking to convince another rationally of our position. According to Johnson, both informal logic and rhetoric see this space in different ways, thus, the first difference is in their respective goals. The *telos* of informal logic is *rational persuasion*, while the *telos* of rhetoric is *effective persuasion*¹. This difference will become more relevant when we examine how rhetoric and informal logic operate within argumentative space. The first characterization of argumentative space is that it is dialectical. All argumentation presupposes a background of controversy where the arguers and the audience may be aware, to a certain extent, about the issues surrounding the argument. With this, I think both informal logic and rhetoric would agree. In this dialectical space, Johnson proposes that the structure of an argument can be divided into two main parts, the illative core and the dialectical tier. The illative core is the central premise and conclusion structure of the argument and "is meant to initiate the process of converting the Other(s), winning them over to the arguer's position" (Johnson 1997: 11). As mentioned, this takes place in a background of controversy, so the Other(s) should not be persuaded by this alone because to do so would be to ignore other possible positions and valuable arguments. What is required, then, is the dialectical tier. The dialectical tier is the area of the argument where the arguer addresses the background of controversy and attempts to answer the real or possible objections to his or her position. Since the goal of informal logic is rational persuasion, "to ignore them [objections], not to mention them, or to suppress them, these could hardly be considered the moves of someone engaged in rational persuasion" (Johnson 1996: 107). Rhetoric too, however, makes allowance for such a tier, and one would even expect that a rhetorically effective argument would meet counter objections. Where exactly lies the difference? I think that the difference can be understood clearly when we bring together rhetoric's *telos* and its emphasis on the audience. Since Aristotle, rhetoric has always been 'audience driven'. According to other philosophers, Perelman and Olbrechts Tyteca also acknowledge the fundamental role of the audience, "argumentation is always designed to achieve a particular effect on those for whom it is intended" (Van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Henkemans 1996: 96). When one constructs an argument, according to rhetoric, one must always have his audience in mind. This means that the argument can be said to be 'tailored' in order to maximize the possibility of the audience's consent. This changes the nature of argumentative space in two ways. First, it is possible for the rhetorician to *only* have the illative core in his argument. Since

the goal is effective persuasion, then it is possible to persuade an audience through the illative core alone. Johnson writes, "if the arguer can achieve the end--effective argument--with only what I have called the illative core, then the interest of rhetoric will have been satisfied"(Johnson 1997: 16). It is possible for the dialectical tier to be present in a rhetorician's argument, but this tier is only necessary if it is needed to persuade the audience. The second way in which rhetoric changes the nature of argumentative space is in regard to the dialectical tier itself. As previously mentioned, since this tier is only constructed by the arguer to achieve effective persuasion, and since rhetoric is an audience driven theory, then it is logical to conclude that the content of the dialectical tier will be tailored to the audience as well. Johnson writes:

Suppose that there is an objection, let us call it O^* , which the arguer knows about and which the arguer also has very good reason to believe his audience does not know about. We may suppose for example the arguer is the editor of a journal that has just received a paper for publication in which this objection is raised; and we suppose that the arguer knows that the author of the paper is not in the audience. *From the point of view of rhetoric, there is no obligation for the arguer to deal with O^* --his argument can be perfectly effective without it* [italics mine] (Johnson 1997: 16).

In other words, due to the goal of effective persuasion of a given audience, a rhetorician is under no obligation to meet an objection that he or she believes the audience does not know about. (I shall return to this point later as it will prove to be useful in supporting my major claim.) If rhetoric is under no obligation to include and answer objections unknown by the audience, then does the arguer under informal logic have any such obligation? The answer to this question is yes, and there are two main reasons for this being the case. First, recall the goal of informal logic: rational persuasion. To fully appreciate the requirements that this goal places on the structure of an argument, Johnson employs the phrase which he calls 'manifest rationality'. It is this concept which fully separates informal logic from rhetoric. According to Johnson, "not only must the practice of argumentation be rational, but it must also be understood by the participants that this is so"(Johnson 1986: 108). It is not enough that the argument be inwardly rational; it must outwardly appear so as well. To make this point clear, Johnson borrows an analogy from the legal system "where we find a similar requirement that not only must justice be done, it must be seen to be done"(Johnson 1997: 13). It may be possible for a judge to deliver a fair, impartial sentence on a member of her family, but to do so would be to compromise the appearance of justice. The same can be said of rationality, since argumentation is a social practice, then rationality must be *seen* to be done, and this is where we must return to our analysis of the dialectical tier. From the perspectives of informal logic, the arguer is obligated, according to Johnson, to include objections of which the audience may not be aware in order to meet the requirements of manifest rationality. So in the case of the journal editor who comes across the serious yet unpublished objection to his argument, the editor must consider this objection and answer it in his dialectical tier. To ignore this particular objection or others, or to "sweep them under the carpet...would not be in keeping with the spirit of the practice" and "it would be an obvious violation of it. Thus, it would not only not *be* rational; it

would not *appear* rational"(Johnson 1996: 108). The second reason for this obligation arises from a difference in style. As previously mentioned, ideally, informal logic is a written practice, while rhetoric tends to have its roots in the oral tradition. Since the medium of informal logic is the written word, it is almost impossible to determine ahead of time exactly the nature of one's audience. A text can have a universal audience in the sense of this quote from Ricoeur, "the meaning of a text is open to anyone who can read"(Ricoeur 1994: 56). In an oral tradition, however, one seems to have more of an awareness of the people whom one is addressing. When the informal logician constructs the dialectical tier, then, in order to account for a wider range of readers, she must apply one of Madison's rules of thumb- comprehensiveness. When Johnson refers to the obligations of the arguer, although he never explicitly states this, there seems to be an ethical element in his conception of informal logic. When we encounter objections to our position, these objections will either prove to be detrimental to our position in the sense that we cannot answer them, or if we can answer them successfully, our position will be stronger. Either way, through interaction with these objections, "one's own 'logos' (discourse/reasoning/ thinking) will be affected in some way"(Johnson 1997: 11). Hence, according to informal logic, this obligation seems to allow for the best possible argument to present itself in the end. If we are under no obligation to expand our own 'logos' through interaction with these objections, then we risk the possibility of presenting our audience with an inferior 'product' whether they are aware of it or not. Does the lack of obligation automatically mean that rhetoric is therefore inferior to informal logic? This is a question that I do not have time to address here, but for my purposes, it suffices to say that in the very least, since rhetoric is not under any obligation to meet the objections unknown to the audience, then there exists the *potential* for the rhetorician's argument to be more limited than the informal logician's. I will return to this later, yet for now I think that it is both this potential of the rhetorician's argument to be more limiting, and the ethical element of informal logic that will help me make my major claim. The final difference between rhetoric and informal logic has to do with their respective evaluative criteria. For rhetoric, the premises of an argument need only to be acceptable to the particular audience; the audience stands in agreement. According to Johnson, however, when assessing the premises of an argument, informal logic should appeal to both acceptability *and* truth. It is important to note, however, that by 'truth', Johnson is not arguing for a return to standards of truth similar to that of formal deductive logic, or any sort of scientifically validated notion of truth. Although he admits that much work needs to be done in this area, he does allow for those who do not want to use the word 'truth' to use alternatives, i.e. "a deeper understanding of the issue"² or "best possible position"(Johnson 1997: 22). To review, the differences between informal logic and rhetoric are in their respective *telos*, structure and evaluative criteria. For rhetoric, the goal is effective persuasion. The goal of informal logic is rational persuasion. Part of the concept of rational persuasion is manifest rationality; it is not enough that an argument be rational, it must also appear rational in order to keep with the spirit of the practice. This manifest rationality places certain demands on the arguer; the presence of the dialectical tier is necessary in an informal logician's

argument, in contrast, for rhetoric, this tier is only conditional. Finally, Johnson holds that a truth requirement must be present in any sort of evaluative criteria, whereas rhetoric only needs acceptance.⁴ Informal logic and Hermeneutics

Recall the major claim: in light of recent developments in argumentation theory, informal logic may have closer ties to hermeneutical theory than rhetoric. To begin my case, consider the final difference outlined in the previous section. For informal logic, it is not enough for the premises of an argument to be acceptable; they also must be true. Johnson allows for an alternative to 'truth' as a "deeper understanding of the issue" or "the best possible position". The question arises then, how does one achieve this? I think it would be useful to import Gary Madison's 'criteria' as the evaluative criteria to expand upon Johnson's truth criterion. We can therefore judge the 'truth' of an argument's premises if the argument can be shown to embody these principles. In contrast, rhetoric's evaluative criteria only has the requirement of acceptability. The rhetorician's premises need not be 'true', it only needs to be 'acceptable' to the audience so that the audience stands in agreement with respect to the premises. My suggestion is that informal logic's 'truth' requirement can interface easier with hermeneutic's conception of truth than rhetoric's acceptability requirement. This is not to say that acceptability can never *lead* to 'truth'. One may have a sophisticated audience that will only accept what is 'true' and has passed Madison's 'criteria'. The difference, as I have said before, is a matter of potential. In her pursuit of acceptance, the rhetorician runs of the risk of excluding too many other positions, since her obligation lies in the persuasion of the audience. The informal logician, however, does not have that risk since the obligation lies with the demands of manifest rationality instead of the demands of an audience, which may not be comprised of ideal subjects, open to all points of view, and only willing to accept the best possible argument³. The ethical demands of manifest rationality leads me to my next point of intersection between informal logic and hermeneutics; the concept of prejudice, and the "fusion of horizons".

As mentioned in a previous section, one's prejudices mainly determine one's horizon. When attempting to understand a text or an Other, we can regard the enlarging of a horizon as an ethical move. My suggestion is that the ethical obligation of the informal logician promotes the expansion of another's horizon more effectively than rhetoric, and thus has a similarity to the ethical element at work in hermeneutics. Hermeneutics tells us that in order to achieve any understanding whatsoever common ground must be found. Informal logic, then, must be partly bound by the concept of prejudice in the sense that the argument may not be so completely alien that there would not be any hope of understanding. In other words, there must be the element of the familiar in the argument. The issue is, however, the degree which the familiar is realized. Recall the obligation imposed by manifest rationality on the informal logician. In an argument, the dialectical tier must be present, and it also must include and answer objections which may be unknown to the larger community. In order to move from alien to the familiar, in order for one to reach a new understanding, one's horizon and prejudices must change. In this sense, informal logic allows for the greater expansion of a given horizon because the obligations imposed

on the dialectical tier mean that the unknown, the alien, must be included and answered in the argument. Thus, when a person is confronted with the argument, and if he truly wants to understand, then his horizon and prejudices must accommodate the newly revealed possible way of being. This scenario differs from rhetoric, since the aim of rhetoric is to gain acceptance from the audience, and it seems reasonable that the shortest route to acceptance for the rhetorician is to 'play' into the prejudices of an audience. These prejudices, though they must shift the horizon in order to fuse with the rhetorician's, have less of a chance of encountering an unfamiliar way of being since the rhetorician has no obligation to address the unknown possibility.

Of course there is nothing preventing the rhetorician from *adding* a dialectical tier to his argument or constructing the tier insofar as the alien and the unfamiliar is present; this is praiseworthy and commendable. The point is, however, that rhetoric imposes no obligations on the arguer to do this. It may also be that the goal of rhetoric is more easily reached when one does not introduce the unfamiliar objections to one's position. It is reasonable to suppose that we are more likely to assent to the familiar because the alien imposes certain demands on our prejudices that we may not want to meet at the time. Reevaluating one's prejudices in light of the new is not an easy task, and hence we tend to praise those who seek to enlarge their horizons, embrace the new, and call into question their certainties.

In conclusion, due to both the inclusion of a hermeneutical conception of 'truth' in Johnson's evaluative criteria, and the obligations imposed on the informal logician, it appears that hermeneutics may have more in common with informal logic than with rhetoric. Informal logic serves the universal project of hermeneutics better with its appeal to manifest rationality because it allows for the larger expansion of one's horizon. This is due to the construction of the dialectical tier which requires the arguer to answer the new possible ways of being that may be unknown to others. If the goal is to just persuade an audience, then this goal is achieved more easily by either the exclusion of the dialectical tier, or its inclusion in a more limited, audience directed way.

The choice, then, for hermeneutics seems to be no longer between a formal demonstrative method as in science, or rhetoric and its associated limitations. Informal logic is a plausible candidate, one that I think merits more attention in the future

Endnotes

¹This characterizes not only Perelman's position, a widely known authority on the subject of rhetoric, but others as well. "We believe the paradigm case of rhetoric is the use of the spoken word to persuade an audience." (Foss, Foss and Trapp 1985: 11).

²I realize that I have only touched on this area briefly and have not given it the

thorough treatment it requires. The truth/acceptability debate is a much contested area in the field of argumentation and for the purposes of space, I cannot go into it here. It suffices to say, however, that Johnson is aware of these arguments and one of the main reasons why he wants both acceptability and truth in the evaluative criteria is that "the notion of truth is presupposed in much of the vocabulary we want to have available when we evaluate arguments". We can still talk about 'truth' without automatically aligning ourselves with a correspondence theory.

3An amusing example of the less than ideal audience is a group of cattle ranchers that were attending a talk given by a former professor of mine. As an environmentalist, she was giving reasons why beef eating is detrimental to both human health and the earth. It was clear to her that the audience was not buying the argument because some were not paying any attention, and others had begun to openly heckle her. She finally got their attention when she came to the last health reason on her list: impotence. It was a deft rhetorical move on her part, but the point of the story is that there are ethical demands placed on an audience when they move into argumentative space. One should be open to all reasons in an argument, not just the ones that have an immediate effect.

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